

16. A dietary supplement according to Claim 13, wherein said supplement is a preparation of the form selected from the list of dehydrated, fermented liquid, and unfermented liquid preparations.

17. The composition of Claim 13, wherein said propionibacteria is one or more selected from the group consisting of the strains TL 223, CNRZ 80, CNRZ 86 and NCDO 1072 of the species *P. acidipropionici*.

18. The composition of Claim 13, wherein said propionibacteria is one or more selected from the group consisting of the strains ITG 23, CNRZ 81, CNRZ 89, CNRZ 277 and LS 2502 of the species *P. Freudenreichii*.

19. A composition for use as an absorbable dietary supplement for human and animal consumption comprising a sufficient quantity of propionibacteria and one or more selected from the group consisting of bifidobacteria and lactic acid bacteria, said composition capable of releasing a physiologically significant amount of nitric oxide into the human and animal digestive tract.

20. A method for making a composition for use as a dietary supplement comprising the steps of:  
providing a supply of propionibacteria; and  
selecting an amount of propionibacteria sufficient to release physiologically significant amounts of nitric oxide into the human and animal digestive tract.

21. The method according to Claim 20, wherein said selecting step comprises selecting more than  $10^9$  cells/gram of propionibacteria.

22. The method of Claim 20, further comprising the step of selecting propionibacteria selected from the group consisting of TL 23, CNRZ 80, CNRZ 86 and NCDO 1072 of the species *P. acidipropionici*.

23. The method of Claim 20, further comprising the step of selecting propionibacteria selected from the group consisting of the strains ITG 23, CNRZ 81, CNRZ 89, CNRZ 277 and LS 2502 of the species *P. Freudenreichii*.

24. The method according to Claim 20, further comprising the step of forming the dietary supplement into one of the group consisting of a dehydrated preparation, a fermented liquid preparation, or an unfermented preparation.

25. A method of making a food composition for use as a dietary supplement

comprising the steps of:

providing a supply of propionibacteria;

selecting an amount of propionibacteria sufficient to release physiologically significant amounts of nitric oxide into the human and digestive tract; and

5 adding said propionibacteria to a food product selected from the list of cheeses, sources of dietary fibre, fermented milk, dessert cream, cake, and tonic drink.

26. The method of Claim 25, further comprising the step of selecting and inserting into a food preparation more than  $10^9$  cells/gram of propionibacteria.

27. The method of Claim 25, further comprising the step of selecting propionibacteria selected from the group consisting of TL 23, CNRZ 80, CNRZ 86 and NCDO 1072 of the species *P. acidipropionici*.

28. The method of Claim 25, further comprising the step of selecting propionibacteria selected from the group consisting of the strains ITG 23, CNRZ 81, CNRZ 89, CNRZ 277 and LS 2502 of the species *P. Freudenreichii*.

29. A method of making a composition for use as a dietary supplement comprising the steps of:

providing a supply of propionibacteria and at least one of the group of bifidobacteria and lactic acid bacteria;

5 selecting an amount of propionibacteria sufficient to release physiologically significant amounts of nitric oxide into the human and animal digestive tract.

30. The method according to Claim 29, wherein said selecting step comprises selecting more than  $10^9$  cells/gram of propionibacteria.

31. The method of Claim 29, further comprising the step of selecting propionibacteria selected from the group consisting of TL 23, CNRZ 80, CNRZ 86 and NCDO 1072 of the species *P. acidipropionici*.

32. The method of Claim 29, further comprising the step of selecting propionibacteria selected from the group consisting of the strains ITG 23, CNRZ 81, CNRZ 89, CNRZ 277 and LS 2502 of the species *P. Freudenreichii*.

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